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Michele Manis Nokleby
The University of Montana

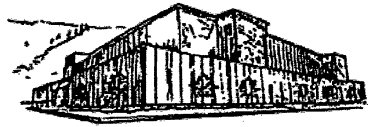
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BUSTLES, BOWS, AND FURTHER FRIPPERY

Victorian Costumes

For The Nutcracker Ballet

By
Michele Manis Nokleby

B.A., University of Montana – Missoula, 1987

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

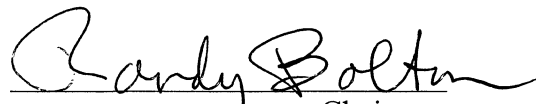
degree of Master of Arts in


Fine Arts, Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana

2003

Approved by


Chairman


Dean, Graduate School

9-10-03

Date

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Nokleby, Michele Manis., M.A., July 2003 Integrated Arts and Education

Bustles, Bows, and Further Frippery: A Victorian Costuming Project.

Director: Randy Bolton 

A series of Victorian era ball gowns were designed and created for the Garden City Ballet's annual production of the Nutcracker Ballet. Fabric selection, pattern adaptations, and construction techniques were important considerations. Principles of theater costuming as well as authentic period details informed the work.

The accompanying DVD documents a public style show. It provides an opportunity to see the gowns in motion, and also shows closer detail.

Directions for the construction of an oversized hoop skirt with a 32-foot circumference are also included. This is the foundation of the costume for "Mother Ginger" character, featured in Act Two of the ballet.

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SELECTING PROJECT

For my final creative project, I designed and constructed a series of nineteenth century gowns for use in a local ballet theater's production of **The Nutcracker**. In past years, I had created costumes for various dance companies around Missoula, but never a project of this scope or scale.

Several years ago, the director of the *Garden City Ballet* had asked me to come under their employ as a costumer. This was flattering, but out of the question, as I had a full time position as an Elementary School Librarian, and was pursuing my Masters' degree during the summers. Additionally, my daughter was well past the age when she was still interested in dance-theater, so my ties with the company had, in my mind, been severed.

Some time later the director called and asked me to reconsider my involvement in costuming. In particular she wished me to consider the undertaking of the ball gowns needed for the first act of the ballet. At the same time, I was fishing for an idea for a project to fulfill the requirements of my graduate degree. It seemed a fortuitous convergence of opportunity, and I decided to pursue it.

RESEARCH

I spent a significant amount of time researching the historical attributes of late nineteenth century clothing as well as the principles of theater costuming learning to appreciate the effects of scale, and the play of light on fabrics. Although many associate the period with sexual repression and modesty, necklines for formalwear were daringly

low, exposing the full cleft of bosom. The bodices were exceedingly tight and the curves of the waist were accentuated by snug corsets as well as strategically placed padding. The skirts had gathers drawn to the back, with bustles and bows to exaggerate the rump. Ornaments and draping were placed to draw the eye to the pelvis and the décolleté. The overall effect was to draw attention to and enhance the female form, not to cover it.

Enormously wide shoulders and gathered or pleated collars gave breadth to the bosom and shoulders that contributed more to the illusion of a very small waist. The shoulder area details also served to balance the visual weight of the voluminous skirts and bustles. The silhouette suggests a triangle capped with an inverted triangle, also called an “hourglass” shape.

The dimensions of a contemporary female body do not come close to replicating a Victorian lady’s figure. She may have been corseted tightly from the time she was three or four years of age, deforming the ribcage, and displacing internal organs within the thoracic cavity. (**Sears Roebuck & Co.** sold corsets for girls as young as two!) The result was the coveted “wasp-waist figure”. Thanks to the new invention of grommets, women were supposed to be cinched in at least one third of their natural proportions. Most surviving historical garments of the period measure seventeen to twenty inches at the waist.

The bustle put much of the decoration and clothing focus on a woman's backside, and emphasized the movement of that body part to heroic proportions. Though it may be difficult to fathom today, the bustle was actually considered a great improvement when it first appeared in the Victorian era, around 1869. Its original name, in fact, is quite telling: magazines of the period called it a “dress improver”—because it was considered a

blessing after the atrocity hoops had become in the eyes of post-war women. It was believed that it helped to set off the carriage of the back. At least one (anonymous) period writer found women's backsides "gloriously sized".

I discovered many amusing anecdotes as I researched clothing of the Victorian era. For example, it was thought that a woman needed to protect herself from lustful men (and her own morality) by wearing heavily reinforced layers of clothing and tight corsets that made getting undressed a long and difficult task. Thus the Victorian costume was dictated in part by moral necessity. Tight lacing was considered a sign of virtuosity. Only the laboring class or prostitutes would forgo these conventions, consequently the term "Loose Woman" entered our lexicon.

With all of these subtleties and layers of meaning embodied in the clothing alone, it is no surprise that this era produced Freudian and Jungian psychology. In fact, both Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud studied the novel *Nussknacker und Mausekonig* by E.T.A. Hoffman on which the story of the ballet is based. This book, with its deep symbolism and archetypal elements, influenced both of these famous theorists.

Hoffmann is one of those artists whose works were so prominent in their own day that they have been adapted into oblivion. The story was revised considerably by Alexander Dumas and published as *The Nutcracker of Nuremberg*. In 1892, Marius Petipaw and Peter Tchaikovsky collaborated on the score for the ballet based on the Dumas revision.

PLANNING THE COSTUMES

The gowns for this project are for use in Act I of the ballet. The setting for the scene is Christmastime in Nuremberg, in the upper-class home of Dr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum. The family is hosting an evening party for close friends and relatives. At the

party, the adults engage in traditional reels and waltzes, and are entertained by automated toys. The female guests, together with Mrs. Stahlbaum's character, all needed to be outfitted with formal ball gowns.

To glean ideas for my designs, I combed through books full of reproduction line drawings of period garments. Numerous fashion plates from *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Harper's Bazaar* are available in books, greeting cards, and clip art collections. I was able to find many illustrations featuring details I wanted to reproduce. Paintings and portraits of women from the era inspired me as well.

It is important to point out that two different, but equally important types of fashion sketches exist. The human figure in the illustrations, found in fashion plates of the time (and today) is idealized. They depict garments on a typically elongated, slender body, but give the illusion of three dimensional form and dynamic movement. For my purposes, I needed more realistic sketches. A schematic drawing of the human figure called a "croquis" provided accurate, standard proportions for my work. I used the croquis provided in a professional dressmaking journal that became the basis for all my preliminary sketches as seen in Appendix B. Although I didn't ultimately duplicate these drawings exactly, they allowed me to work out design details, as well as communicate my ideas to others.

PATTERNS

Luckily, some reproduction patterns are commercially available adapted to fit modern figures. I did not use any one pattern, but openly borrowed bits and pieces from many. I freely modified the suggested cutting and sewing lines to get the look I wanted,

and used parts interchangeably. The Simplicity Company's "*Costumes On Stage*" line of patterns was very helpful, as were the Butterick Company's "*Making History*" patterns. The schematics provided in the book *Patterns For Theatrical Costumes: Garments, Trims & Accessories from Ancient Egypt To 1915* were the most helpful of all. The drawings were easy to reproduce in scale with the help of an overhead projector. This is one of many books I borrowed via interlibrary loan to assist me in my work, but is the only volume I chose to order for my personal library.

Authentic patterns of the era informed my work, but I learned to create the dresses in a way that "suggested" the Victorian era, rather than trying to duplicate the styles exactly. I achieved the look of the enormously wide shoulders and collars effect with the addition of ruffles, puffed sleeves, silk flowers, and other bouffant trimmings. I added bustles to many of the gowns, but I kept them small and without trains, as the stage is very crowded, and the dancers would not have been able to avoid stepping on them. A few of the gowns feature oversized bows reinforced with netting in the back instead of bustles.

I wanted the dancers to be comfortable. Freedom of movement as well as reducing heat of the dancers is an important consideration in the design of the costumes. Luckily, this was also the case with real ball gowns of the time. Women of that era would have chosen sleeveless or short sleeved dancing garb for precisely the same reasons. This practice was adhered to regardless of the time of year.

FABRICS/COLORS

The festivity of the season is reflected in color choice. I employed traditional Christmas hues of red, white, green and gold frequently. Victorians tended toward somber tones in everyday dress, but for events such as these, brighter colors were used. Pastels were considered suitable only for younger women or day wear, but I did include two gowns in softer colors; one rose, the other lavender.

Fabric patterns tend to act as camouflage on the stage, cutting up the optical field, especially when many of the characters are on stage at one time. For this reason, I tried to stay with predominantly solid colors. Many details that would make the dresses seem true to the period would be unnoticeable from the audience, so I often used trims with stronger contrast than is generally found in “real” clothing.

While selecting fabrics, I also had to consider the durability standards necessary for the longevity of the dresses. These new gowns will be used for many years to come, and need to be sturdy enough to withstand hours of strenuous movement. The previous set of gowns were over ten years in age, and had been made of acetate satin, which degrades easily. Although they had been carefully dry cleaned each year, they were literally self-destructing with each performance. It was unlikely that they would have lasted another season.

Though the bodices are designed to fit very tightly, the hooks and eyes are easily moved to perfect dimensions. My instinct was to use Velcro as closures, but I was told that it makes too much noise backstage. I carefully encased all seams and boning, keeping several layers of fiber between the stays and the skin. I used skin-friendly cotton

for all linings. The crinoline petticoats under each dress contain yards and yards of nylon netting, but I made sure that none of the scratchy nylon contacts the wearer. The dancers also wear nude colored spaghetti-strap leotards under the dresses.

Sizing for the costumes was a challenge, as different dancers will be wearing them each year. My solution was to make the gowns in a variety of sizes, ranging from what seemed impossibly petite dimensions to those ready to accommodate a more voluptuous, mature figure. I also added extensions in the backs of the gowns, and used hooks and eyes for closures, which enables each garment to grow or shrink by four to six inches. Adjusting the hem or putting the dancer in a larger hoop petticoat can shorten skirt lengths. Detachable ruffles serve to lengthen the skirts for taller dancers.

PURCHASING

The ballet company has agreed to reimburse me for the cost of the supplies, but it was important to remain conservative in my spending. The company operates on a shoestring, and has limited funds for costuming projects. Each gown required ten to fourteen yards of fabric, depending on the style (with the exception of the *Mother Ginger* gown, which required close to thirty yards). Purchasing luxury fabrics, such as velvet or silks would have been prohibitively expensive, and ornate trims and laces can easily cost more per yard than the fabric itself. For that reason, I tried to create these gowns with salvaged or bargain materials and trims. I combed Goodwill and Salvation Army thrift shops weekly for used drapes, haunted the clearance racks at the fabric store, raided my mother's attic, and used a box of my Grandmother's old sheets for the linings and petticoats. I spent about three hundred and seventy dollars altogether.

CONSTRUCTION

The actual construction of the gowns was laborious. I purchased industrial threads, each cone wound with three thousand yards of thread. I used at least one cone per dress. My sewing machine had to be replaced once, and repaired twice. I estimate that I have logged over seventeen “sewing miles” on the machine with this venture. The gowns each took many hours to complete. I found by the time I had finished each one I temporarily hated it. Each one seemed to be an embodiment of frustration, error, and uncertainty. It took several weeks before I was able to look at each one and appreciate it as a thing of beauty. Yet, I seemed unable to stop creating them. Each visit to the fabric store would inspire me to start anew. When I see each gown being worn, I am able to forget any annoyance or dissatisfaction I felt during construction.

MOTHER GINGER

Strangely, in November I received another call from a different dance company. The director was frantic. She had commissioned a costume with a professional designer in Southern California for the *Mother Ginger* character in **The Nutcracker**. However, the designer had just landed a lucrative movie contract and was unable to honor her previous obligations. The director had heard through “the grapevine” that I might be willing to take on the commission. Had I not already decided to devote my energies to costuming, I would have declined, but this assignment seemed to fit with the mission I had undertaken. Consequently, I found myself creating a gown of colossal proportion, as well as the ball gowns previously agreed to. I began right away, as the outfit was needed for a stage production within the month.

The character of *Mother Ginger* (sometimes called Mother Buffoon) appears in Act II of the ballet. Our main character, Clara Stahlbaum, has traveled to a psychedelic world with her escort, the Nutcracker Prince. There she is entertained by dancing sweets from around the world, bears witness to the poetry of a mythical garden, and is introduced to the mysteries of romantic love by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

Mother Ginger is a relatively minor character, but is always a crowd pleaser. She is a huge Venus figure, monstrous and appalling. In Freudian analysis, *Ginger* embodies Clara's fear of childbirth. The character mirrors the ridiculous paradox of public delight yet private production of humanity as a number of babies (Gingersnaps) magically appear from under her skirt, and then are swallowed up again.

Usually played by a very large man, some productions even put the actor on stilts. The actor wows the crowd with the sheer magnitude of his costume, and then entertains with broad drag humor. The artistic director required a skirt of eight to ten foot diameter, under which the small dancers remain hidden until *Mother Ginger* releases them.

Because this character represents the Great Earth Mother, I decided the color red must figure prominently, as well as exaggerated feminine attributes...huge bosoms, garish make-up, excessive ribbons, bows, and other frippery in her costume.

I was unable to find helpful instructions or guidelines for the construction of *Mother Ginger's* dress. I fell back on the expertise of my husband who is a building contractor, and my experience in furniture upholstery to get me through. Creating a hoop skirt of this scale is an engineering feat, rather than tailoring. I have included my assembly strategy here in detail; perhaps it will be of service to someone in the future.

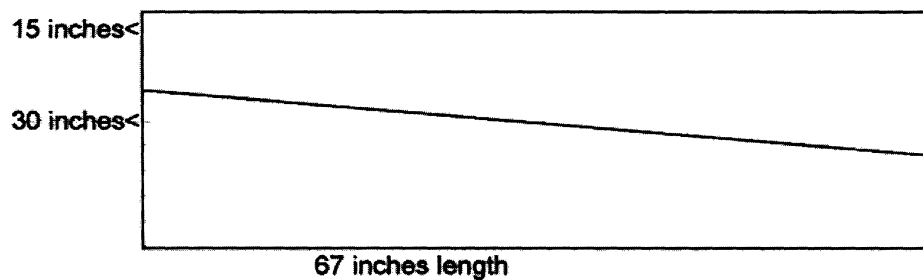
The hoop petticoat was a major ordeal. The only *Mother Ginger* costume I had

examined was created with copper pipe. That costume weighed in at over fifty pounds, and the heavy piping would frequently come down on the heads of her little babies (the Gingersnaps), resulting in minor injury. We needed something just as strong, just as big, but much lighter. To create the hoop petticoat, I sewed three king-sized bed sheets together, and made casings every three feet. We initially inserted industrial tubing designed for heating systems, but it was not strong enough to support itself rigidly at a thirty foot circumference. We then used three-quarter inch PVC tubing, but had difficulty bending the tubing at an arc and getting the joints to stay. Because of the stress, they kept popping out. Finally the problem was solved by cutting dowel plugs about six inches long, coating them with PVC glue, sticking the two ends of pipe together over the plug, and using duct tape bound over that. This results in a sturdy splice.

It was important to determine the waist opening first, gather it up, and then start with the first hoop. I inserted as much PVC as it would hold, then worked down. I had initially started at the bottom, but ended up with an unworkable waist opening, and had to start over. The entire skirt took about seventy-five feet of PVC pipe altogether.

The outfit required thirty yards of fabric, hard to shop for, as a standard bolt only contains fifteen yards. One is limited to whatever the fabric store has a lot of and will sell at an affordable price. The material I used was selected and purchased by the company to complement the existing “Gingersnap” costumes they already had.

I laid out the fabric for the skirt as shown in the following diagram. I cut the on the diagonal, then sewed the selvages together to create a series of gores for the skirt. The drawing is for fabric that is forty-five inches wide, but could be adapted for sixty-inch fabric easily, by changing the side measurements to twenty to forty inches, respectively.



The resulting skirt was plenty wide enough to accommodate the dimensions of the hoops. Before hemming, it was necessary to shore up the bottom of the skirt, so that it was of uniform length all around. The skirt is attached to a wide waistband reinforced with four inch upholstery webbing and an adjustable parachute clip to close it with. For the overskirt, the artistic director wanted me to incorporate several tree skirts she had found that were decorated with a large gingerbread man motif. I used three of the tree skirt semi-circles to make flounces attached to the bottom of the bodice.

The bodice itself is reinforced at the seams with boning and heavy interfacing to support the “falsies” worn by the dancer, as well as give definition to his/her torso. It is lavishly trimmed with white rickrack and ribbon to suggest the icing found on a gingerbread cookie. It is important to have the design adjust to fit many sizes of dancers over the years, so the front of the bodice laces up with ribbon, through brass grommets. I also put grommets at the shoulder, with ribbon closures to fit any number of shoulder widths.

For the blouse, I chose a raglan sleeve design, for ease of movement and ability to fit any size. I made long sleeves, gathered at the wrist, elbow and bicep with elastic. The neck is high and ruffled, a demure look for *Mother Ginger*, which also hides her rather prominent Adam's apple.

The bonnet she wears must be huge in scale, to balance the exaggerated skirt. For the foundation, I took an ordinary baseball cap, let down the facing at the brim, and used rigid plastic canvas (the kind used for needlepoint) to extend the visor area of the hat to a full twelve inches in length and width. I upholstered this first in cotton batting then in fabric to match the bodice. A large circular puff filled with polyester netting sets off the back. The bonnet is trimmed with ribbon, lace, and ruffles, and then ties at the neck.

Mother Ginger's undergarments were also important. I found a gargantuan brassiere at the Goodwill Thrift Shop, and carved two very large breasts from foam rubber to fill the cups. Each breast is about the size of a half watermelon. Because *Mother Ginger* frequently bends over (in a very unrefined manner), she needed fancy bloomers. I decided to make satin "rumba style" bloomers, with layers of ruffles across the rump, for a sexy look. This completed her ensemble.

NEVER ENDING JOB

This project is by no means finished. Each year, a new group of dancers will be wearing the gowns. Each individual body is unique, requiring closures to be moved, and lengths to be adjusted. Following the fittings come more revisions. Further ideas for embellishment will surface when a dancer is actually wearing the garment. After the final fittings come the rehearsals. Any structural weaknesses will need to be repaired,

and any last minute modifications made. I am committed to the long-term success of these costumes.

SHARING MY PROJECT

One of my considerations is the effect this work will have on children. Each year, students in my school attend a production of **The Nutcracker**. I intend to share the costuming project with them, thereby offering a sense of ownership via association. It is valuable for children to understand that stage productions do not just occur through some magical process, but through the hard work and artistic decisions of ordinary people. I take pleasure in nurturing the arts community in Missoula, and supporting the production that has become a local tradition for children and their families, whether they participate directly or as part of the audience.

At the conclusion of my project, I staged a Victorian style show to exhibit my work to my colleagues and the general public. The show and the following reception provided an opportunity for me to celebrate my work. I chose to display the gowns in this way so that the audience could appreciate the way the costumes looked and moved on the human form. I was also able to share historical background and discuss the construction of each dress individually in my commentary, as each model came on stage. The show was well attended, and very well received. The show can be viewed in its entirety on the enclosed DVD.

NEW CHALLENGES

This undertaking offered me new and exciting challenges in composition and design, as well as providing a route to my artistic expression. Using the language of attire, I developed my sense of identity as an artist, by creating something of lasting value and importance. Stepping out beyond my previous level of competency allowed me to develop my aesthetic capabilities and gain confidence. I enjoyed interpreting the desires of the artistic director in form, color, texture and materials manipulation. It was a delight to make each dress unique and expressive on its own.

My confidence as an artist increased while I was researching historical costuming on-line. There is no shortage of people advertising their services to make custom Victorian dresses for theater, parties, or reenactments. I feel that my designs compare favorably with the products of these professional dressmakers. In the future, I may even “hang a shingle” in the Internet marketplace myself.

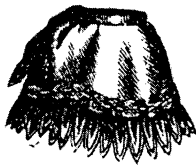
I cannot fathom ever devoting this much time and energy to a cause without having the thrust of *Creative Pulse* as my instigation. Now that the endeavor has wound down, I feel proud of the outcome. I am confident that the costumes will be well received and valued. The best reward is in seeing the things I create in motion. The delight on a dancers’ face when she dons a costume I have prepared makes my labors especially satisfying. Nonetheless, the risk of putting my work out on stage, to be critiqued by performers and audiences over the course of years, is daunting and exhilarating.

APPENDIX A

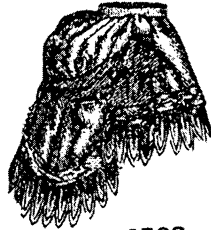
Inspirations



No. 2127.—LADIES' BALL COSTUME. (See page 72.)

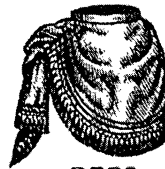


2728



2728

Ladies' Over-Skirt.
Waist measures, 20 to 30 inches.
6 sizes; 30 cents each.



2560

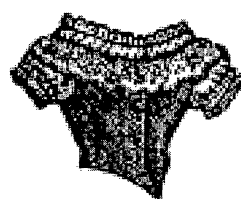


2560

Ladies' Over-Skirt, with Sash.
(Only for Dress-Makers.)
Waist measures, 20 to 30 inches.
6 sizes; 40 cents each.

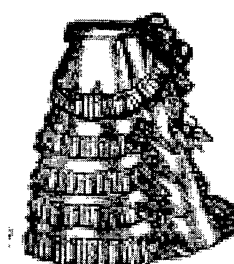


2702



2702

Ladies' Low-Necked Waist.
Bust measures, 28 to 46 inches.
13 sizes; 20 cents each.

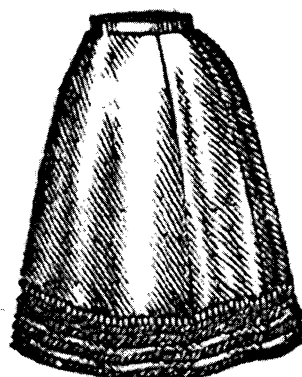


2711



2711

Ladies' Tunique Skirt.
Waist measures, 20 to 36 inches.
9 sizes; 50 cents each.



2208



2208

Ladies' Demi-Trained Skirt.
Waist measures, 20 to 30 inches.
6 sizes; 30 cents each.



Detail from painting of
Pauline, Princesse de Broglie, 1853,
Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Sketches







APPENDIX C Color Plates and Annotations



Pink Dress

Soft colors imply purity and innocence. Pink in particular is suggestive of child-like femininity. The typically smaller dimensions of a youthful figure also do not need to be minimized with dark hues. For these reasons, pastels in general were usually reserved for younger women. The fabric was chosen for its delicate sheen, and because it drapes well. Each dress has been fully lined and features a built-in petticoat with ruffles and crinoline. The full skirts are always worn over hoops. Although the blush of youth is the only ornamentation Gretchen needs, pale pink roses and bountiful white lace trim supply embellishment on this very feminine confection of a dress.



Copper Dress

A tiny scrap of rich brocade provided the foundation for this dress. This bodice, as with all the dresses in the show) is reinforced with almost ten feet of boning to mimic the effects of a corset. Boning was originally taken from whales, but is now made from stiff plastic that is sewn into each seam. It encourages ramrod straight posture, and gives dresses enough structural support to defy gravity. Unlike most ball gowns, this dress also has longer, more fitted sleeves. The rich coppery shade of the skirt is good under stage lights, and the fabric moves well. I was told that the artistic director did not like yellow, but I could not resist the unusual pleated fabric I found that complemented the brocade. I used it extensively as flounces on the skirt and bustle. Gold beadwork and bows add a touch of glitz to reflect light and catch the eye of the audience.



Garnet Dress

This is a more sophisticated dress without excessive poufs, ruffles or bows. Quiet elegance is conveyed with the deep color of the fabric, which is actually woven of hot pink and black threads. The overall impression is of an iridescent garnet. The trim is a rayon fringe in a dark green. Lest the dancer fade into the shadows, beads have been added to add sparkle, thus enhancing the visibility of the wearer. Like many ball gowns, this one is sleeveless to allow freedom of movement, dissipation of heat, and to show off the lily-white arms of the Victorian lady. The lovely pale complexion that was prized at the time is set off by the contrast of the dark hue, and gives Lara a patrician air.



Indigo Dress

The lustrous satin is beautiful under the stage lights. Most affordable satins are made of acetate fiber, which lacks durability. I was fortunate to find this fabric that is an unlikely blend of silk and polyester for added durability. This is an important consideration since these dresses will be used annually. This dress features a froth of white tulle trim; laced with silver threads, blue beads, and crystal ornaments. Ruffles at the shoulders and puffed sleeves broaden the silhouette of the shoulders, balancing the visual weight of the skirt. Cathy is wearing an extra wide hoop skirt, which shows off the detail. Hoop skirt diameter is a way to control the length of a gown on the dancer as well. If a gown seems too long, a wider hoop will often correct the problem. This is a much easier remedy than altering a hem that measures eighteen feet in circumference!



Dark Green Dress

This dress screams Christmas! Otherwise utilitarian Girl Scout green twill fabric has been dressed up dramatically. The addition of gold tissue lame double flounces, fluffy green lace, ruched ribbon, and sequins make this a gown Lawrence Welk could appreciate. Victorians were **BIG** on trim. They used excessive pleats, ruffles bows, fringe, beads, and more...often all on the same dress.

This outfit is the “stagiest” of all the dresses I made, bordering on tackiness. The strong contrast and bright trim however, is striking. The character wearing this dress will shine, while her more subtle (tasteful?) companions might fade into the background from the audience’s vantage point.



Gold & Green Dress

Just like Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, the fabrics I used for this ensemble were salvaged from discarded draperies. I am especially pleased with the luster of the gold and green fabric used for the bodice and bustle. I used gold glittery fabric spray paint to add a little panache to the heavy green velvet skirt. Dozens of gold Poinsettia blossoms frame the neckline, and give the gown a celebratory look. I used fishing line to attach them securely. The fingerless gloves are easily made with stretch lycra.

The draping across the pelvis is a strategy employed by Victorian dressmakers to add visual interest and exaggerate the curves of the female form. This is the first gown I constructed, and remains my personal favorite of the series.



Caramel & Cream Dress

To keep this creamy colored ensemble from looking too much like a bridal gown, I added a skirt in a darker color. The caramel cloth is another example of creative reuse of materials. It is cut from an old prom dress I found at the Salvation Army. As a result, the skirt on this dress is narrower than the others, but the addition of a crinoline underneath and twin rows of ruffles near the hem keep it from looking skimpy.

Rows and rows of ruffles are repeated in the “Mariachi Sleeve”. This is an ethnic touch borrowed by the Victorians from the Spanish. The many ruffles combined with the sheer organza fabric reflect light and give an ethereal appearance to this dress. The bodice, skirt and bustle are trimmed in lustrous seed pearls and delicate lace.



Lavender Dress

This dress is made for a petite dancer, and is well suited to Kelsey's small frame. If needed the length can be easily increased for taller women with the addition of a black satin ruffle at the hem. The lavender organza overskirt is punctuated with rows and rows of black lace. The lace also traces the seam lines of the bodice. The high contrast keeps an otherwise subtle shade from turning drab and vanishing into the surroundings. Authentic Victorian ball gowns often had huge bustles or long trains but the crowded conditions of the stage makes this impractical. This dress is one of several that feature a pretty satin bow in the back instead.



Striped Dress

An important principle of theater costuming is to avoid the use of print fabrics. From the audience, patterns tend to camouflage the character, especially with a detailed set and the presence of others on stage. That is why all of the other dresses are made with solid colors. This bold striped fabric, however, looked just like Christmas ribbon candy, and had a lovely sheen. It was also on sale, so I was unable to resist breaking the rules a little bit for the sake of this dress. The festive stripes are really the only ornamentation the gown needs, but I picked up the tiny red stripes with matching red ribbons at each sleeve. This costume is also scaled for a petite frame, and the vertical stripes help the Kiley look a little taller.



Bright Red Dress

This cheerful little dress was made with tablecloth fabric. It has high polyester content, which gives it a little sheen, and also will make it wear like iron. Fairy tale princess lines are traced with high contrast lace on the bodice of this gown. The lace also frames the sweetheart neckline and sleeves. The sleeves are made with elastic, and can be worn off shoulder, or pulled up for a more modest look. White satin panels on the front of the skirt are adorned with more lace and silk roses.





Mother Ginger

Mother Ginger appears in Act II of **The Nutcracker**, and has the stage to herself, until she reveals the eight to ten baby Gingersnaps hidden beneath her skirt. She is always a crowd pleaser. A huge Venus figure, she actually represents Clara's fear of childbirth. A very large man usually plays her. Some productions even put the actor on stilts.

The production required a skirt with a thirty foot circumference, which I constructed using lots of trial and error and about seventy-five feet of PVC pipe. A costume like this requires about thirty yards of fabric. The bodice is reinforced with boning and heavy interfacing to support the "falsies" worn by the dancer. Grommets provide flexibility in fitting her hefty form. It is lavishly trimmed with white rickrack and ribbon to suggest the icing found on a ginger bread cookie.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ashelford, Jane. *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society, 1500-1914*. New York: Harry N Abrams, 1996.

This book offers not only descriptions of garment details and of the manner of wearing in historical context but also excerpts from writings by contemporaries. Fabric, embellishment, color and form are easy to see and appreciate in the many color photographs. Excellent for costume designers who are tired of guessing from paintings or fashion plates on the historical accuracy of how things actually fit.

Blum Stella, ed. *Victorian Fashions & Costumes From Harper's Bazaar 1867-1898*. New York: Dover Books, 1974.

Extensive and detailed illustrations, with good captions (including dates), are divided into four style periods. A narrative introduction to each period gives general style trends. Very useful: includes hairstyles, shoes, parasols, aprons, decorative details, etc.

Bryk, Nancy Villa, ed. *American Dress Pattern Catalogs, 1873-1909: Four Complete Reprints*. New York: Dover Books, 1988.

This volume shows actual patterns from older Butterick catalogs. It includes costumes for children and men as well as ladies' garments. The size ranges available tells us that not all women boasted the "ideal" wasp-waisted figure. I enjoyed finding out about the pricing and incentives used to entice buyers to purchase these patterns.

Butterick Pattern Co., *Making History: 3012*. New York: Butterick Inc., 2001.

Features a lightly boned, longer length bodice with an attached bias drape used for the green/gold Dress. The pattern calls for an attached skirt that is much too narrow for dancing. I made the ensemble with a separate skirt.

Butterick Pattern Co., *Making History: 6195*. New York: Butterick Inc., 1999.

Used for the lavender, striped, and bright red dresses. This pattern includes instructions for making the "Mariachi" sleeve. The pattern skirt is a little on the short side, so I added six inches to the length.

Butterick Pattern Co., *Making History: 6693*. New York: Butterick Inc., 2000.

A pattern for a very full, pleated skirt attached to a fairly ordinary bodice. Interesting collar treatments are optional. I used one of the collars on the indigo gown. The sleeves offered with the pattern are too skimpy, so I increased the ease considerably to get the fullness I wanted.

Holkeboer, Katherine Strand. *Patterns For Theatrical Costumes: Garments, Trims & Accessories from Ancient Egypt To 1915*. New York: 1st Drama Book Publishers, 1998. Basic tailoring, garment construction, and pattern drafting skills are recommended when using this book. It's a useful tool that simplifies the designs of a given period and suggests possible variations and embellishments on that theme, pursuant to creating basic and/or theatrical costumes. I found the 1/8th & 1/16th scale patterns very easy to use.

Hoffmann, E.T.A. *Nutcracker*. Trans. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Crown Publishers, 1984.

The tale of **The Nutcracker** has fascinated and inspired artists, composers, and audiences for almost two hundred years. Maurice Sendak designed brilliant sets and costumes for the Pacific Northwest Ballet's production of **The Nutcracker** and for this book. He joined with the translator Ralph Manheim to produce this illustrated edition of Hoffmann's wonderful tale.

McCall Pattern Service., *Evening Elegance: 3315*. New York: McCall's Inc., 2001. The cream/caramel gown has a shorter bodice that I used this pattern to make. The pattern has sleeve and skirt options that I chose not to use.

Manheim, Ralph, and R.F.C Hull, Eds. *The Freud/Jung Letters: Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

What began as a cordial friendship between two great thinkers deteriorated into written arguments on many subjects. E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Nutcracker* is just one of many novels discussed. The book makes the Freud/Jung correspondence accessible to a general readership. Note that editor Ralph Manheim also translated and collaborated with Maurice Sendak on an illustrated version of *The Nutcracker*.

Sauer, Jennifer. "Fashion Sketching For Untrained Artists," *Taunton's Threads* 105 (Feb./Mar. 2003): 54-55.

This article and its accompanying web files helped me to plan unique garment designs. I was introduced to the croquis (schematic figure drawings providing standard human proportions) that became the basis for all my preliminary sketches.

Simplicity Pattern Co., *Simplicity Costumes: 8249*. New York: Simplicity Inc., 1998. This is a pattern for an Elizabethan era gown. I used the bodice suggestions to make the top of *Mother Ginger's* dress, with grommets for lacing up the front and at each shoulder.

Simplicity Pattern Co., *Simplicity Costumes On Stage: 9723*. New York: Simplicity Inc., 2001.

I used the skirt from this pattern for all the two-piece gowns and petticoats. It has truly Victorian styling, with the fullness drawn to the back.

Roth, Elizabeth Elam. "Aesthetics of the Balletic Uncanny in Hoffman's 'Nutcracker and Mouse King' and 'The Sandman,'" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 22.1 (Spring 1997): 39-42.

The only examination of the symbology of the ballet's characters I have found. The article discusses Freud's notion of "*The Uncanny*" which is a term used to describe the return to consciousness of repressed infantile complexes. ('The Sandman' was adapted into the lesser-known ballet 'Coppélia'.)